S T A T E   O F   C O N N E C T I C U T
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
DIVISION OF FIRE, EMERGENCY AND BUILDING SERVICES
OFFICE OF EDUCATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT
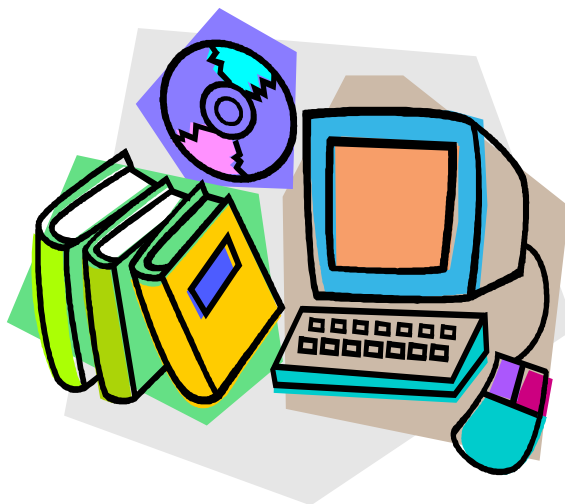
NFIRS 5.0

Coding
Questions
&
Error Messages

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FORWARD

The following information is taken from the NFIRS 5.0 Coding Issues Handout that was used in the NFIRS 5.0 Coding Issues career development program in November, 2003.

These questions were obtained from those asked of the USFA or those who have come into our office.

This information is being made available to assist you in reporting your incidents using the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS 5.0).

If you have any questions please call Jolynn Van Wart, Trainer, NFIRS 5.0 at 860-685-8372.

Basic Module (NFIRS-1) General Questions_____

Question: If a fire department is cancelled while en-route to an incident (Incident Type 611), does the entire Basic Module have to be completed?
Answer: It is not necessary to complete blocks G2, H2, H3, I and J.

Question: Should incident reports be generated for a fire department training exercises?
Answer: Incident reports should not be submitted for training exercises unless there is a fire service casualty at the training exercise. You would then need to create an EMS incident in the system and treat it as if the same department with the injuries responded to the EMS. The reason for this is that NFIRS is an incident based system and without establishing an incident response, the injuries can not be captured.

Question: A fire department responds to a call for power lines down and on arrival finds the wires are telephone or cable wires. What is the Incident Type?
Answer: The department reports based on what it finds, not what it is dispatched to. Therefore, this is a good intent call and should be coded as Good Intent, Other (600).

Question: Should we use code "621 - Wrong location" when we are unable to find an incident scene that we were dispatched to?
Answer: Yes, 621 would be an appropriate code to use in the situation described.

Question: Can Incident Type 300 be used for an incident where an EMS module will be used?
Answer: No, validation rules will not allow it. Some 300 series Incident Types will not allow the EMS module to be used, such as 340 series. One solution is to select a specific EMS type incident rather than the generic 300 Incident Type.

Question: An individual set fire to a paper towel in a department store and held it up to a sprinkler head. The sprinkler activated transmitting an alarm causing the fire department to respond. What Incident Type should be used for this situation?
Answer: The fire was not a hostile fire. The fire was controlled and used as device to set off the sprinkler. The incident type is not a fire. The incident type code is 700, Malicious False Call, Other.

Question: A fire department responds to a motor vehicle accident with reported injuries. Upon arrival, department personnel evaluate each victim and find no injuries. How would the incident type and action taken be coded?
Answer: The incident type could be a "vehicle accident, general cleanup (463)" or "good intent, other (600)" depending on the situation. The Type of Actions Taken would reflect what was done and could include "checking for injuries (31)", "removing hazard (45)" or "investigation (86)".

Question: A fire department is notified six weeks after the fact of the following case. It appears that an elderly woman was cooking. Her clothes catch fire and she is burned. A male companion comes to visit, finds her on the floor, badly burned, and takes her to the hospital. She is then transferred to the burn center where she died. There was no response by fire department, police, or EMS.
Answer: Since there was no fire department response, there was **NO INCIDENT**.
The department may want to collect information on fire where there is no fire department response in a separate database

Question: On an airplane fire incident, is the owner information supposed to reflect the owner of the vehicle (airplane) or the property where the airplane sits?
Answer: Owner information is for the aircraft.

Question: On a vehicle fire, is the owner listed on the Basic Module, Block K2, the owner of the property or the vehicle?
Answer: The owner listed is the owner of the vehicle. If a non-owner is driving the vehicle, then that person is entered in the Person/Entity Involved field. If the vehicle fire extends to other property, then information on the owner of that property is captured on an exposure report.

Question: Does the Basic Module (NFIRS-1) need to be completely filled out when the Fire Department responds to an EMS call?
Answer: If the Incident Type is 321 (EMS call), the Basic Module (NFIRS-1) must be completed. This includes all sections including H_1 Casualties. Listing the name of the person involved is a local option.

Question: In the Basic Module, Block H1, Casualties, it is not clear whom to include in the total casualty count.
Answer: The total listed in the Fire Service Casualty fields includes all injuries or deaths related to any type of incident. There may be more Fire Service Casualty reports completed than the total listed in Block H1 because Fire Service Casualty Reports can also be used to record the exposure of fire fighters to hazardous materials or infectious diseases at the incident. Recording a code 1 in Block G3 of the Fire Service Casualty Module indicates such exposures that do not immediately cause an injury or death. The total civilian casualties includes fire related injuries and deaths only, and does not include injuries or deaths due to EMS, hazardous materials incidents or other incident types.

Question: Should the firefighter casualty count on the Basic Module, block H1, include only firefighters injured during fire?
Answer: No. All firefighter injuries are to be reported regardless of what type of incident they occurred at. Remember to also complete a firefighter casualty form (NFIRS-5) for each firefighter casualty.
Question: How are resources defined in the Basic Module (G1)?
Answer: The <u>TOTAL</u> number of fire department personnel and apparatus (suppression, EMS, other) that responded to the incident. This includes ALL fire and EMS personnel assigned to the incident whether they arrived at the scene or were cancelled before arrival.

Question: How is the location of an incident indicated when Directions or Intersection is selected in the Basic Module (B)?

Answer: When either "Directions or "Intersection" is selected for the location of an incident, one street name should be entered on the "Street or Highway line", and the directions or cross street should be entered on the "Cross Street or Directions" line. If this procedure isn't followed, the incident will be invalid.

Question: If the FDID number of the receiving fire department on a "Aid Given" response is not a required field, why is a warning error created if it is left blank?
Answer: The warning is creating if the FDID number is not provided to remind fire departments to get the data if they can. When the information is not available the field may be left blank.

Question: If an incident involved the fire department giving aid to a private ambulance service or police department, should that be reported as "Aid Given" in block D of the Basic Module?
Answer: No. Aid to a private ambulance should be coded as an incident type 311 with the appropriate actions taken. The assistance to the police would be coded as an incident type 551 or 552, again, with the appropriate actions taken.

Question: We have a number of jurisdictions that have contracted with other fire departments or districts to provide fire protection services. The problem we are having is identifying where the incidents actually took place. An example of this would be: Westport Fire District #1 provides fire protection services to the City of Westport. The fire district is also submitting NFIRS 5.0 data for both jurisdictions. What FDID number should be used in this instance? Is it possible to issue FDID numbers with a +1 code, or letter delineator that would identify "contract departments", or is it required that the contracted agency enter data using the contractor's FDID?
Answer: You cannot assign a plus one code to a FDID. NFIRS 5.0 now includes a "station" field, which can be used locally to distinguish between the different stations that share a common FDID. Assign a unique station ID for each of these contract departments. That way when you see the incident report you can tell who did what by looking at the station number, even though one is reporting for both jurisdictions and they all have the same FDID. So, essentially you would be treating them as "stations" of the same fire department (for reporting purposes only).

Fire Module (NFIRS-2) _____

Question: Heat from a fire resulted in the melting of aluminum sliding on an adjacent house. The adjacent house sustained major dollar loss. Is this an exposure? If so, what is the incident type?
Answer: The use of the exposure fire is limited to situations where there is actual flame damage. If the adjacent property is damaged due to water, heat, smoke, or fire control, include the damage in the main report (Exposure 000). The owner /occupant information can be captured on NFIRS Form 1S, Supplemental Report. Multiple person and entities involved can be documented on this report. The number of buildings involved should be documented in the Fire Module, Section B2.

Question: A vehicle catches fire on a parking ramp. Two other vehicles catch fire from the first vehicle. Are these two vehicles considered an exposure fire or, as is in the Version 5.0 manual, should you "treat similar items in a group as a single exposure", such as a fleet of cars?
Answer: This is a situation that calls for some judgment. If the cars on the ramp are in a general parking facility and they each have separate individual owners, treat each as a separate vehicle fire exposure. If, instead, a fleet of vehicles is involved and they all have the same corporate owner then they may all be treated as a single exposure.

Question: What incident type would be used for a small single bush that burned outside? What modules need to be completed?
Answer: Section C code is Incident Type 142. Because of this, the Basic Module (NFIRS-1) and the Fire Module (NFIRS-2) will have to be completed.

Question: On the Fire Module, how would a fire be coded in section "E" that results from material being placed or stored too close the a heat source.
Answer: The cause of ignition would be "unintentional (2)," the Factor contributing to ignition would be "heat source too close to combustibles (12)," and Human factors contributing to ignition would be coded as "none."

Question: I got an error because I had both mobile property and equipment involved in ignition. The incident involved a car running into an air conditioner.
Answer: When a vehicle is involved in the ignition, rather than completing the "Equipment Involved" fields, there are specific fields designed just to capture vehicle information. You can never have Equipment Involved in Ignition and Mobile Property involved in Ignition on the same incident. Only one type of equipment can be involved in the ignition of the fire. They are mutually exclusive.

Question: Why can't code 71 (exposure) be entered in the fire module?
Answer: If an incident is not an exposure incident (exposure number = 000), the system will not accept the entry of code 71 (exposure) in the Fire Module (NFIRS-2) Factors Contributing to Ignition field.

Question: In the Structure Fire Module, Building Height (I3), should mechanical or enclosed attic spaces be counted as a separate story or as a part of the highest story?
Answer: Mechanical spaces and enclosed attics should be counted as a separate story only if they have normal access (stairs or doors) and are of at least standing height. Inaccessible attics, attics with less than standing height, inaccessible mechanical spaces or the roof would normally be part of the highest story.

Question: When coding a structure fire in an apartment building, do you enter the square footage, Block I4, for just the apartment involved in the fire or for the entire building.
Answer: The length times the width (in feet) of the floor where the fire occurred (square feet).

Question: If a firefighter is injured on the job but not at an incident, e.g. at a training exercise, would the total injuries shown under Fire Service Casualty in Basic Module, Block H1, include this injury?
Answer: Yes. An incident should be created for all fire service causalities, whether or not they occur at an incident, and these injuries included in the total in Block H1. The incident type would probably be coded as "EMS call (321)".

Question: Can hazardous materials incident related civilian casualties be entered in Block H1 of the Basic Module?
Answer: No. Only fire-related civilian casualties are listed in Basic Module Block H1 and the Civilian Casualty Module may be used for only fire related incidents.

Question: If there is a non-fatal civilian fire casualty and that person dies subsequent to leaving the scene, what is the criteria for reporting this casualty as a death?
Answer: If the person was injured as a result of the fire and died up to one year after the fire, they should be reported as a fatality. The civilian casualty report will need to be updated.

Question: In the Fire Service Casualty Module, Block K1, how should multiple injuries to a firefighter be reported? Which injury is the one to track relative to equipment failure?
Answer: If a single accident at an incident results in multiple injuries to the same firefighter, the most significant injury should be reported. If equipment failure was a contributing factor to any of the injuries in a single accident, that equipment failure should be reported. Please note that because only one injury can be reported, the equipment failures noted may not always correlate to the injury reported.

Question: On the EMS Module, Initial Level of Provider (L1), is it the intent to report fire department personnel only or private ambulance services as well?
Answer: You are only reporting on your department's activities. Private ambulance services are not reported.

Question: We are EMT-I with defibrillator certification. We contract with a paramedic service to respond to all of our EMS calls. What codes should we use in the Initial Level of FD Provider at Scene and Highest Level of FD Provider at Scene? Currently we are using EMT-B to indicate our department and 0-Other health provider to indicate the ambulance service. Example: On most calls we would provide the initial care and the ambulance personnel would then take over. We would enter "EMT-B" for initial care and "0"(Other health provider) for highest level. Is this correct?
Answer: You would code your EMS runs exactly as you indicated for initial level of provider but would only indicate the highest level of care provided by your personnel. For instance a first responder unit, equipped with an EMT-B and an EMT-I, arrives on scene for a patient with chest pain. Code L1 as (3) then the 3rd party ambulance (Rural Metro, AMR, etc.) arrives. Code L2 as (3) also, since another Agency is now transporting and caring for the patient.

Question: If the Fire Department fills out the EMS module, is the department still required to complete a patient care record.
Answer: The EMS Module is NOT a patient care record, but should be used in conjunction with the local requirements for patient care. The EMS Module is not intended to replace or otherwise interfere with state or local EMS patient care reporting requirements, nor is it intended to be a comprehensive EMS patient care report. Instead, the data elements in this module should be viewed as "core elements" around which a complete patient care report can be built.

Question: If EMS is involved with a spill or leak or special hazmat action, wouldn't the incident type reflect the spill, leak or hazmat action?
Answer: If there is a combination of HazMat and EMS, the incident may include both hazardous materials and EMS modules. On the basic module the FD will choose wheither to categorize it as an EMS or a HazMat incident.

If they choose EMS as the incident type, they are allowed to complete the HazMat module. If they choose HazMat as the incident type, they can complete the EMS module. These modules are captured in either case, but the department needs to decide which incident type best describes the overall type of situation they found on arrival.

Question: If a single hazardous materials incident involves more than one property, how do you report the address/locations of each property? Would each of the properties be treated as exposures? For example, gasoline in ground water seeps into the basement of three homes.

Answer: Exposure reporting is limited to fire incidents. If it is necessary to record the address/location of each property, the Person/Entity Involved fields (Block K1 of the Basic Module or Supplemental Module) can be used.

Question: If specialized fire apparatus such as a hazardous materials vehicle or a fire investigation support unit is purchased on a regional basis, but stored and staffed by a local fire department within that region; how does the department responding with the specialized unit report the incident type and actions taken?

Answer: The incident type would be reported as the situation they responded to. The department responding with this special unit would be giving aid even though the fire department receiving the aid may be part of the region that purchased the equipment. The persons responding with the equipment would report the actions they took which might be to provide the apparatus (Action Taken 74) with someone else actually using the tools and equipment, or you may document other actions which involved using the apparatus.

Question: As a result of the recent anthrax incidents, our department has responded to numerous incidents for investigations of potential biohazards. How would we code these incidents?

Answer: As of the January, 2002 NFIRS Specification Cycle release, the NFIRS 5.0 Incident Type codes includes 3 new codes intended to help departments code biohazard incidents. Here are some examples:

Intentional Biohazard Incident
Code the Incident Type as Incident Type 451 (Biological hazard, confirmed or suspected).
• The Hazardous Material Release field (H3) should be coded as 0 (Other, special HazMat actions required) and the Hazardous Material module (NFIRS-7) should be completed.
• On the Hazardous Materials module (NFIRS-7), code the Cause of Release as 1 (Intentional).
• Type or write the actual name of the biohazard agent in the Chemical Name field (ex. Anthrax) on the Hazardous Materials module (NFIRS-7) rather than picking one of the chemicals from the existing database list.
• For Anthrax releases code one of the Factors Affecting Mitigation as 21 (Release of an extremely dangerous agent).

Unintentional Biohazard Incident
• Same as above except code the Cause of Release as 2 (Unintentional).

Biohazard Reported -- No Hazard Found
• Good intent calls, use Incident Type 672 (Biological hazard investigation, none found).
• False Biohazard threats use Incident Type 751 (Biological hazard, malicious false report).

ERROR MESSAGES

Warning Messages

Error: Missing values for property loss, contents loss for fire incidents
In the Basic Module (module 1) item G2 Estimated Dollar Losses and Values, the property and contents losses are to be reported for fires if known. However, when reporting dollar and contents losses, pre-incident values must also be entered or a critical error will be generated. Dollar amounts should be in whole numbers only. **Remember that these dollar amounts are only ESTIMATES** you should not feel uncomfortable entering a reasonable dollar amount.

Error: Incident type cancelled en-route/ incident action not cancelled en-route
If Incident Type (C) is 611 cancelled en-route, then Actions Taken (F) must be cancelled en-route. If another action taken is used, the Incident Type must relate to that particular action taken. ie: Code 746 Smoke Detector Activation, Action Taken, 86-Investigate. Cancelled en-route is only used as an Action Taken when no one from the fire department arrives at scene. Capturing the cancellation of a piece of apparatus is done on the Apparatus Module (9).

Error: Mutual aid given FDID number requested
This warning occurs when Block "D" Aid Given or Received has number 3 or 4 checked. The computer is looking for the FDID number of the department you are giving mutual aid to. By entering this number, you are detailing your mutual aid calls.   This also allows the giving department short-form reporting.

Error: Number of Civilian Fire Casualties on Basic module does not equal the number of Civilian Fire Casualty modules.
When entering the number of Civilian Fire Casualties in H1 (Basic Module), you must be sure that the number you enter equals the number of Civilian Fire Casualty Modules (module 4) completed. As a reminder, Module 4 is only completed for fire-related injuries or deaths. This module should not be completed for the person who is injured in a motor vehicle or other type of accident.

Error: UN number is not equal to suggested UN number
This warning is stating that the number that you entered is not in the lookup table of UN numbers. Please check your software to see if you can add this number to the lookup table.

Error: CAS registration is not equal to suggested CAS registration
This warning is stating that the number that you entered is not equal to the lookup table. If you are not able to get a particular registration, it is permissible to leave it blank.

Error: Chemical name not found in lookup database
There are many chemicals that may be encountered in hazmat incidents. If you have to add a chemical name that is not in the NFIRS database, it can be added to the lookup table so this error does not occur.

Error: When I use plus-one codes for my local information, why do I get errors?
Plus-one codes are used as a local option for departments to specify in detail particular incident information about the call. When these incidents are processed at the state level, there is no provision for these types of codes so the computer gives a warning error that the code specified does not relate to the standard code and it will therefore not be processed as a plus-one. Some plus-one coding errors received may include:

Plus-one codes may not be defined in relation to structure type.
Plus-one codes may not be defined in "Property Use".
Plus-one codes may not be defined in "Incident Actions Taken".
Plus-one codes may not be defined in "Provider Impression" in EMS Module (NFIRS-6)

Critical Error Messages_____

The software that is used to operate the NFRIS system at the local level should be responsible for catching <u>all</u> critical errors prior to exporting the incident reports to the state. If this is not happening, the vendor from whom the software was purchased must be contacted to correct this problem.

Error: Apparatus arrival time cannot precede incident arrival time
This error occurs when the Arrival Time on the Apparatus Module (9) differs from the Arrival time that is entered on E1 Dates and Times (Basic Module NFIRS-1). It is extremely important that care is taken to make sure that the times are the same. Your software may not validate the times on the Apparatus module with the times on the Basic Module. This is especially true in the use of CAD systems.

Error: Apparatus clear time cannot exceed incident last unit clear time
This error occurs when the Last Unit Cleared time on the Apparatus Module (9) differs from the Last Unit Cleared time which is entered on E1 Dates and Times (Basic Module) . It is extremely important that care is taken to make sure that the times are the same. Your software may not validate the times on the Apparatus module with the times on the Basic Module. This is especially true in the use of CAD systems.

Error: Basic module required data--directions
When completing Section B Location (Basic Module, NFIRS-1) using Directions as the incident location, make sure that the Directions box is checked. Entering directions as a Street Address will cause this error.

Error: If property loss and contents loss is completed, property and contents pre-incident values must be entered.
As mentioned previously under warning errors, if you complete Estimated Dollar Loss and Values (Section G2 Basic Module, NFIRS-1) and do not enter a pre-incident property and contents value a critical error is generated.

Error: Actions taken invalid given incident type
This error occurs when Code is entered in Incident Type (Section C Basic Module NFIRS-1) that is not compatible with the Actions Taken listed in Section F. The Primary action taken (1st one) must be in agreement with the incident type chosen. (Incident type is coded a 746 Smoke detector activation and the 1st Action taken is code 11,extinguishment.)

Error: Arrival time given prior to alarm time
This error occurs when the Arrival time for the first piece of apparatus is prior to the Alarm time of the incident. This type of error should be immediately picked up by the software validation as a critical error when the time is entered.

Error: Pre-incident Property Value/ Pre-incident Contents Value
Property/Contents loss values cannot exceed pre-incident property/contents values. Care must be taken to make sure that dollar loss figures entered in G2 (Basic Module-NFIRS 1) are in relation to one another. In other words, if you put a property/contents loss figure in, you must have a corresponding pre-incident value entered in as well.

Error: Mobile property involved – required data
If the Incident Type (Section C-Basic Module, NFIRS-1) indicates a vehicle fire, then Mobile property involved in the Fire Module, NFIRS-2, Section H1) must be completed. This cannot be left blank. This type of error should have been found on the local level during export validation.

Error: Fire contributing factors
If contributing factors equal "none", no other factors can be listed.
In multiple choice fields, if a selection of None (N,NN, or NNN) is entered, no other code may be selected.

Error: Required Data—On-site Materials
If Property use codes equal 500s, 600s, 700s, and 800s, then On-site Materials or Products (Fire Module, Section C) must be completed. These are commercial, industrial, manufacturing or agricultural uses of the property. Otherwise do not complete this section.

Error: Total sq. ft or building height and width is required
Section I4, Main Floor Size, Structure Fire Module (NFIRS-3) is a required field. You can either enter the total square feet or length or width, but you must complete this section. The software used to operate the NFIRS system should also catch this.

Error: Fire Spread Invalid (given # of stories damaged)
Fire spread is how far the flame damage extended. The number of stories damaged relates to flame damage only. It does not include damage caused by heat, smoke or water. The numbers entered in both these fields Sections J2 and J3, Structure Fire Module (NFIRS-3) must be consistent or this error will occur.

Error: Alarm time can't precede injury time on fire service casualty module
When completing the Fire Service Casualty Module (NFIRS-5), please be careful in recording times of injury. Again when times are entered in the Basic Module, Section E1, these should be checked against the time you are entering in Module 5.

Error: Hazardous Material Module (NFIRS-7) Not Allowed (given incident type)
Hazardous Materials Module (NFIRS-7) is only allowed for incident type codes of: 100-243; 400-431; and 900.

Error: Fire Service Casualty Module—Story of Injury: Can't be zero when injury occurred =2
If an injury occurred in a structure, the story where the injury occurred cannot be zero.
In this case, The injury occurred at the fire station (2). Therefore, there must be an associated floor or story with that code. If it was at the fire station, but outside, then where the injury occurred must reflect that.

Error: Detector Alerted Occupants required for confined fires
Information regarding the presence of detectors in the general area of the fire's origin and their operation is necessary in structure fire situations. This becomes a required field when the incident type codes in Section C, Basic Module (NFIRS-1) indicate confined fire codes 113-118.

Error: If procedures used = none, no other procedures may be listed
Care must be taken when completing EMS Module (NFIRS-6). Procedures are what is done for the patient. If you do nothing for the patient, then check off none. This more than likely will occur when there is a refusal or no patient at all. In that case, it may not even be necessary to complete the EMS Module (NFIRS-6).

Error: If human factors contributing to ignition = none, then no other factors may be listed.
In Section E3 of the Fire Module (NFIRS-2) when there are no human factors that contributed to the ignition of the fire, you must leave the entire section alone. You cannot check the box none, and then check #7 Age was a factor. None means no human factors contributed to the ignition including age.

Error: Detector Type, Detector Power Supply and Detector Operation are required data.
When Section L1 in the Structure Fire Module (NIFRS-3) indicates that there were detectors present, L2 Detector Type, L3 Detector Power Supply, and L4 Detector Operation must be completed. Each one is contingent upon the other.

Error: Type of right of way only valid when right of way is specified
Section M Right of Way, Wildland Module (NFIRS-8) looks for information when there is a right of way on the property of the fire. This information is required if the ROW is < 100 feet. You can't put type of right of way if you haven't indicated there was a right of way.

Error: Required Data # of Acres Burned
When Section C Incident Type Basic Module (NFIRS-1) indicates a brush, grass or forest fire, the number of acres burned becomes a required field.